

# VU Research Portal

## A grammar of Rapa Nui

Kieviet, P.J.A.

2016

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### **citation for published version (APA)**

Kieviet, P. J. A. (2016). *A grammar of Rapa Nui: the language of Easter Island*. [PhD-Thesis – Research external, graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

### **E-mail address:**

[vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl](mailto:vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl)

# Table of contents

---

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of contents.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Symbols and abbreviations .....</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>Maps.....</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Rapa Nui: the island and the language.....	1
1.1.1. The island and its name .....	1
1.1.2. Origins.....	2
1.1.3. Snippets of history .....	3
1.2. Genetic affiliation.....	5
1.2.1. Rapa Nui in the Polynesian language family .....	5
1.2.2. Evidence for Eastern Polynesian and Central-Eastern Polynesian .....	8
1.3. The Rapa Nui language: typology and innovations.....	11
1.3.1. General typology.....	11
1.3.2. Innovations and losses in Rapa Nui .....	12
1.4. Sociolinguistic situation .....	14
1.4.1. Influence from Tahitian and Spanish .....	14
1.4.2. Language use and vitality .....	17
1.4.3. Orthography.....	18
1.5. Previous work on the language .....	20
1.5.1. Lexicon .....	20
1.5.2. Grammar and sociolinguistics.....	20
1.6. About this grammar.....	22
1.6.1. A corpus-based study .....	22
1.6.2. The corpus.....	23
1.6.3. Organisation of this grammar .....	25
<b>2. Phonology .....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1. Introduction.....	27
2.2. Phonemes .....	27
2.2.1. Consonants.....	27
2.2.2. Vowels.....	30
2.2.3. Phoneme frequencies .....	32

2.2.4. The glottal plosive.....	33
2.2.5. The glottal plosive in particles.....	34
2.3. Phonotactics .....	36
2.3.1. Syllable structure .....	36
2.3.2. Word structure .....	37
2.3.3. Cooccurrence restrictions.....	41
2.4. Suprasegmentals.....	43
2.4.1. Stress.....	43
2.4.2. Intonation.....	45
2.5. Phonological processes.....	48
2.5.1. Regular processes .....	48
2.5.2. Lexicalised sound changes .....	50
2.5.3. The phonology of borrowings .....	53
2.6. Reduplication .....	56
2.6.1. Patterns of reduplication.....	57
2.6.2. Functions of reduplication .....	64
2.6.3. Reduplications without base form .....	68
2.7. Conclusions.....	68
<b>3. Nouns and verbs.....</b>	<b>71</b>
3.1. Introduction: word classes in Rapa Nui.....	71
3.2. Nouns and verbs.....	72
3.2.1. The noun/verb distinction .....	72
3.2.2. Lexical noun/verb correspondences.....	79
3.2.3. Syntactic nominalisation.....	83
3.2.4. Nouns used as verbs .....	93
3.2.5. Nominal drift.....	93
3.3. Nouns.....	95
3.3.1. Classification of nouns .....	95
3.3.2. Proper nouns .....	96
3.4. Verbs.....	99
3.4.1. Classification of verbs .....	99
3.4.2. Active, stative, intransitive .....	101
3.5. Adjectives .....	103
3.5.1. Does Rapa Nui have adjectives? .....	103
3.5.2. Degrees of comparison.....	111
3.6. Locationals.....	114
3.6.1. Introduction .....	114
3.6.2. Relative locationals.....	115
3.6.3. Absolute locationals .....	122
3.6.4. Temporal locationals.....	126
3.6.5. The locational phrase.....	127
3.7. Conclusions.....	128

<b>4. Closed word classes .....</b>	<b>131</b>
4.1. Introduction.....	131
4.2. Pronouns.....	132
4.2.1. Personal pronouns.....	132
4.2.2. Possessive pronouns.....	133
4.2.3. Benefactive pronouns.....	135
4.2.4. Uses of pronouns.....	136
4.3. Numerals .....	138
4.3.1. Forms of the numerals .....	139
4.3.2. The numeral phrase .....	144
4.3.3. Ordinal numerals .....	147
4.3.4. Definite numerals.....	147
4.3.5. Fractions.....	149
4.4. Quantifiers.....	150
4.4.1. Overview .....	150
4.4.2. <i>ta'ato'a</i> “all” .....	151
4.4.3. <i>paurō</i> “each”.....	153
4.4.4. <i>ananake</i> “together”.....	154
4.4.5. <i>rauhuru</i> “diverse” .....	155
4.4.6. <i>tētahi</i> “some, other”.....	156
4.4.7. <i>me'e rahi</i> and <i>rahi</i> “much, many” .....	158
4.4.8. Other quantifiers.....	162
4.4.9. <i>tahi</i> “all” .....	164
4.4.10. The quantifier phrase.....	165
4.4.11. Conclusions .....	165
4.5. Adverbs.....	167
4.5.1. Verb phrase adverbs.....	167
4.5.2. Sentential adverbs.....	169
4.5.3. Individual adverbs .....	169
4.5.4. Sentential particles.....	174
4.6. Demonstratives.....	183
4.6.1. Forms .....	183
4.6.2. The <i>t</i> -demonstrative .....	185
4.6.3. Postnominal demonstratives .....	187
4.6.4. Demonstrative determiners.....	192
4.6.5. Deictic locationals.....	195
4.6.6. Demonstrative pronouns .....	197
4.7. Prepositions .....	199
4.7.1. Introduction .....	199
4.7.2. The preposition <i>i/i</i> “in, at, on” .....	200
4.7.3. The preposition <i>ki</i> “to” .....	203
4.7.4. The preposition <i>mai</i> “from”.....	205
4.7.5. The preposition <i>pe</i> “toward” .....	205
4.7.6. The preposition <i>a</i> “along; towards” .....	206

4.7.7. The benefactive prepositions <i>mo</i> and <i>mā</i> .....	207
4.7.8. The preposition <i>pa/pē</i> “like” .....	209
4.7.9. The instrumental preposition <i>hai</i> .....	210
4.7.10. The deictic preposition <i>'ai</i> .....	212
4.7.11. The prominence marker <i>ko</i> .....	212
4.8. Conclusions.....	217
<b>5. The noun phrase.....</b>	<b>219</b>
5.1. Introduction: the structure of the common noun phrase.....	219
5.2. The collective marker <i>kuā</i> .....	221
5.3. The article <i>te</i> .....	222
5.3.1. Introduction: determiners .....	222
5.3.2. The function of the article <i>te</i> .....	223
5.3.3. The syntax of <i>t</i> -determiners .....	225
5.3.4. <i>te</i> as marker of referentiality.....	229
5.4. The predicate marker <i>he</i> .....	231
5.4.1. <i>he</i> as predicate marker .....	231
5.4.2. Other uses of <i>he</i> .....	231
5.4.3. <i>he</i> is a determiner.....	233
5.5. Numerals in the noun phrase .....	234
5.5.1. Numerals before the noun.....	234
5.5.2. Numerals after the noun .....	235
5.5.3. Optional numeral placement; <i>e tahi</i> “one” .....	237
5.6. Plural markers .....	238
5.6.1. The plural marker <i>ŋā</i> .....	238
5.6.2. Co-occurrence of <i>ŋā</i> and the determiner.....	240
5.6.3. Other words used as plural markers .....	241
5.7. The noun: headless noun phrases.....	242
5.8. Modifiers in the noun phrase .....	244
5.8.1. Introduction: types of modifiers.....	244
5.8.2. Compounds .....	246
5.8.3. Modifying adjectives .....	252
5.9. Adverbs and <i>nō</i> in the noun phrase.....	253
5.9.1. Adverbs .....	253
5.9.2. The limitative marker <i>nō</i> .....	254
5.10. The identity marker <i>'ā/'ana</i> .....	256
5.11. The deictic particle <i>ai</i> .....	257
5.12. Heavy shift .....	258
5.13. Appositions.....	259
5.13.1. Common nouns in apposition .....	259
5.13.2. Proper nouns in apposition .....	260
5.14. The proper noun phrase .....	261
5.14.1. Structure of the proper noun phrase.....	261
5.14.2. The proper article <i>a</i> .....	263

5.15. Conclusions.....	266
<b>6. Possession .....</b>	<b>269</b>
6.1. Introduction.....	269
6.2. Possessive constructions .....	269
6.2.1. Possessives in the noun phrase .....	270
6.2.2. The partitive construction.....	272
6.2.3. Other possessive constructions.....	274
6.2.4. Summary: use of possessive forms .....	276
6.3. The semantics of possessives .....	278
6.3.1. Relationships expressed by possessives.....	278
6.3.2. <i>a</i> - and <i>o</i> -possessives.....	280
6.3.3. Possessive relations marked with <i>a</i> and <i>o</i> .....	282
6.3.4. General discussion.....	292
6.4. Conclusions.....	297
<b>7. The verb phrase.....</b>	<b>299</b>
7.1. Introduction: the structure of the verb phrase .....	299
7.2. Aspect marking .....	300
7.2.1. Introduction .....	300
7.2.2. The obligatoriness of aspectuals .....	301
7.2.3. Neutral <i>he</i> .....	301
7.2.4. Perfective <i>i</i> .....	305
7.2.5. Imperfective <i>e</i> .....	309
7.2.6. The contiguity marker <i>ka</i> .....	314
7.2.7. Perfect aspect <i>ko</i> – <i>ā</i> .....	318
7.2.8. Aspectuals and constituent order.....	323
7.3. Preverbal particles.....	325
7.3.1. <i>rava</i> “given to” .....	325
7.3.2. Degree modifiers .....	325
7.4. Evaluative markers.....	328
7.4.1. The limitative marker <i>nō</i> .....	328
7.4.2. The asseverative marker <i>rō</i> .....	330
7.4.3. Conclusion.....	332
7.5. Directionals .....	333
7.5.1. Use of directionals.....	333
7.5.2. Directionals with motion, speech, and perception verbs .....	342
7.5.3. To use or not to use a directional .....	346
7.6. Postverbal demonstratives.....	347
7.6.1. Introduction .....	347
7.6.2. Proximal <i>nei</i> .....	348
7.6.3. Medial <i>ena</i> .....	349
7.6.4. Neutral/distal <i>era</i> .....	350
7.6.5. PVD’s with perfective <i>i</i> .....	351

7.7. Serial verb constructions .....	352
7.7.1. Introduction .....	352
7.7.2. The syntax of SVC's in Rapa Nui .....	353
7.7.3. Semantics of SVC's .....	355
7.8. Conclusions.....	357
<b>8. The verbal clause .....</b>	<b>359</b>
8.1. Introduction; constituent order .....	359
8.2. Case marking: introduction .....	362
8.2.1. Case in Polynesian .....	362
8.2.2. Case in Rapa Nui.....	363
8.2.3. Preliminaries to the analysis of case marking.....	364
8.3. Marking of S/A.....	365
8.3.1. The agentive marker <i>e</i> .....	365
8.4. Marking of O .....	374
8.4.1. Use and non-use of the accusative marker.....	374
8.4.2. Conclusion: Rapa Nui is an accusative language .....	379
8.5. The passive .....	380
8.5.1. Passivisation in Rapa Nui.....	380
8.5.2. The pseudopassive .....	384
8.5.3. Two other uses of <i>e</i> .....	385
8.6. Non-standard verbal clauses.....	386
8.6.1. Marked constituent orders .....	386
8.6.2. Topicalisation.....	390
8.6.3. The actor-emphatic construction .....	395
8.6.4. Other non-canonical arguments.....	399
8.7. Case marking in nominalised clauses .....	410
8.8. Obliques.....	411
8.8.1. Indirect object? .....	411
8.8.2. Marking of obliques .....	412
8.9. Reflexive and reciprocal .....	414
8.10. Comitative constructions: “with” .....	415
8.10.1. Introduction .....	415
8.10.2. Pronouns as comitative markers .....	416
8.10.3. <i>ararua</i> and <i>ananake</i> “together” as comitative markers .....	417
8.10.4. <i>koia ko</i> “with” .....	418
8.10.5. <i>ko</i> without comitative marker.....	419
8.10.6. Pronouns as NP <sub>i</sub> : inclusory and exclusory use.....	420
8.10.7. The inclusory pronoun construction .....	420
8.11. The vocative .....	421
8.12. The causative.....	422
8.12.1. Introduction .....	422
8.12.2. Causativisation of intransitive predicates .....	423
8.12.3. Causativisation of transitive verbs .....	425

8.12.4. Reflexive and implicit causatives.....	426
8.12.5. Lexicalised causatives .....	428
8.12.6. The causative prefix with nouns .....	428
8.12.7. Lexical causatives.....	429
8.13. Conclusions.....	430
<b>9. Nonverbal and copular clauses .....</b>	<b>433</b>
9.1. Introduction.....	433
9.2. NP NP clauses.....	433
9.2.1. Classifying clauses.....	433
9.2.2. Identifying clauses .....	435
9.2.3. Comparing classifying and identifying clauses .....	438
9.2.4. Constituent order in identifying clauses .....	440
9.2.5. Split predicates.....	441
9.2.6. Clefts .....	442
9.2.7. Attributive clauses .....	444
9.3. Existential clauses.....	446
9.3.1. Verbless and verbal existential clauses .....	446
9.3.2. Existential-locative clauses.....	447
9.3.3. Possessive clauses.....	448
9.4. Prepositional predicates .....	450
9.4.1. Locative clauses.....	450
9.4.2. Proprietary clauses.....	450
9.4.3. Other prepositional predicates.....	451
9.5. Numerical clauses.....	451
9.6. Copula verbs.....	452
9.6.1. <i>ai</i> “to exist” as a copula verb .....	453
9.6.2. <i>riro</i> “to become” .....	455
9.7. Conclusions.....	456
<b>10. Mood and negation.....</b>	<b>459</b>
10.1. Introduction.....	459
10.2. Imperative mood .....	459
10.2.1. The imperative .....	459
10.2.2. Third-person injunctions (jussives) .....	461
10.2.3. First-person injunctions (hortatives).....	461
10.3. Interrogatives .....	462
10.3.1. Polar questions.....	462
10.3.2. Content questions.....	464
10.3.3. Dependent questions .....	471
10.4. Exclamatives.....	472
10.4.1. <i>ka</i> in exclamations .....	472
10.4.2. <i>ko</i> in exclamations .....	472
10.4.3. <i>'ai</i> in exclamations .....	473



10.5. Negation .....	474
10.5.1. The neutral negator <i>'ina</i> .....	474
10.5.2. Status and origin of <i>'ina</i> .....	478
10.5.3. The perfective negator <i>kai</i> .....	481
10.5.4. The imperfective negator ( <i>e</i> ) <i>ko</i> .....	482
10.5.5. Negation of the imperative .....	483
10.5.6. The constituent negator <i>ta'e</i> .....	484
10.5.7. The negator <i>kore</i> .....	488
10.5.8. <i>hia/ia</i> “not yet” .....	489
10.6. Conclusions .....	489
<b>11. Combining clauses .....</b>	<b>491</b>
11.1. Introduction .....	491
11.2. Coordination .....	491
11.2.1. Asyndetic and syndetic coordination .....	491
11.2.2. Disjunction .....	495
11.3. Clausal arguments .....	496
11.3.1. Perception verbs .....	497
11.3.2. Aspectual and manner verbs .....	499
11.3.3. Cognitive verbs .....	502
11.3.4. Speech verbs .....	503
11.3.5. Attitude verbs .....	504
11.3.6. Modal verbs .....	505
11.3.7. Summary .....	507
11.4. Relative clauses .....	507
11.4.1. Introduction .....	507
11.4.2. Relativised constituents .....	508
11.4.3. Aspect marking in relative clauses .....	513
11.4.4. Possessive-relative constructions .....	515
11.4.5. Bare relative clauses; verb raising .....	517
11.5. Subordinating markers .....	520
11.5.1. The purpose/conditional marker <i>mo</i> .....	520
11.5.2. The irrealis marker <i>ana</i> .....	524
11.5.3. The purpose/temporal marker <i>ki</i> .....	528
11.5.4. <i>'o</i> “lest” .....	532
11.5.5. <i>mai</i> “before; while” .....	533
11.5.6. Summary .....	534
11.6. Adverbial clauses .....	535
11.6.1. Adverbial clause strategies .....	535
11.6.2. Time .....	535
11.6.3. Purpose: bare purpose clauses .....	542
11.6.4. Reason .....	544
11.6.5. Result .....	545
11.6.6. Condition .....	546

11.6.7. Concession.....	547
11.6.8. Circumstance.....	548
11.6.9. Summary .....	549
11.7. Conclusions.....	550
<b>Appendix A: Interlinear texts .....</b>	<b>551</b>
1. <i>Te tātane tarata</i> – The devilman (R215).....	551
2. <i>Tikitiki 'a 'Ataranga</i> – Tikitiki a Ataranga (R352) .....	554
3. <i>He oho ija o te nu'u hoko rua rama</i> – The trip of two people who went torch fishing (R357) .....	563
<b>Appendix B: The text corpus .....</b>	<b>567</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>571</b>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>595</b>
<b>Subject index .....</b>	<b>601</b>